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# Who Are YOU?

Defining who you are as a brand is the first crucial step to implementing a content strategy. If you have not already done so, start with a basic statement of the type of business you are in, the type of customers you serve and how you serve them.

## Your Brand

### Logos & Trademarks

A logo is a symbol that represents your organization. Sometimes, companies place so much weight on their trademarked images, they run the risk of over branding themselves. If branded content overshadows your goal of engaging, educating, storytelling or building relationships, you could lose your audience.

If your agency uses a branded logo or character, please ask yourself:

- Does my branded logo reflect my organization?
- Does my logo or character exclude any group?
- Is it clear what Georgia government department my agency belongs with?
- If it were not for my logo, would people still know who we are based on the content provided?

Keep in mind, while logos help with brand identity, most people who come across your site in search of a solution aren't paying too much attention to themed images or logos.

### Tone of Voice (TOV)

When producing content, your Tone of Voice (TOV) is how you speak to your audience. The goal of using a TOV is to instill a ?feeling? when your audience reads your content. Are you writing to gain empathy, authority or credibility? Perhaps you use humor so that your story is entertaining or people can relate to you. If you are writing for the general public, you may decide that it's fine to casually address the audience as ?you.?

If you currently do not have a TOV guideline, here's a quick and easy way to create one:

- **Take a look at your existing content.**

Everything ? including white papers, press releases, e-books, blog articles or social media posts counts as content. What is the overall tone you have been using? Is it a tone you want to keep or modify? Choose examples of the brand voice you'd like to embody.

• **Describe your brand voice in three words.**

If your brand were a person, how would you describe its personality to someone? (If you don't already have an established TOV, how would you like to be perceived?)

Let's use Consumer Ed again as an example. Consumer Ed wants to address your everyday consumer in Georgia. Their goal is to establish a kind of down-to-earth credibility. For Consumer Ed, let's use these three characteristics as an example:

- 1. Trustworthy
- 2. Personable
- 3. Informed

• **Create a brand voice chart.**

A brand voice chart quickly offers a reference on how you will speak to your audience. Take your three brand personality characteristics and put them into a table. Further describe each characteristic and include a tactical "Do" and "Don't" column for each.

**Brand Voice Chart (Example From Consumer Ed)**

Voice Characteristic	Description
Trustworthy	We are a trusted friend with a voice of reason when it comes to looking out for our readers' best interest.
Personable	We are down-to-earth and approachable. Go ahead, no question is too silly.
Informed	We're going to give you the straight dope and use an active voice to keep things brief and to-the-point. We make it easy for you to find the tools you need to make informed choices.

**Goal: Establish Credibility**

**Do Talk Like This:**

**Do NOT Talk Like This:**

"We're close friends with the Georgia Department of Law. So send us your question regarding a consumer-related issue in Georgia and we'll post a reply for all to see on our site."	"Do you have a question concerning a consumer-related issue? Want to know whether a certain practice by a business is legitimate? Wondering what your rights are? Do you suspect an offer you received might be a scam? Just submit your question to Consumer Ed by filling out the form below. While we cannot respond directly to individuals, you can read answers to select questions here."
"We're here to answer your questions about major purchases in Georgia."	"The Georgia Department of Law's Consumer Protection Unit has designed this website as a comprehensive resource to help you make wise decisions."
"Watch out for high interest rates when financing a car through the dealership. Try comparing rates with banks or credit unions for the best loan terms."	"Although you can conveniently get financing through the car dealership, the price you pay for that convenience is typically a higher interest rate. To get the most favorable loan terms, your best bet is to arrange financing through your bank or credit union before going to the dealership."

**Your Web Content Style Guide**

Content style guides ensure consistency in grammar, style, tone and punctuation for your site. Having uniform experience in these things gives your readers a sense of familiarity and allows them to focus on your message.

Most writing on the web uses the [AP \(Associated Press\) Style Guide](#) [1], which tends to be brief with simple punctuation. The Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS) on the other hand, is generally characterized by longer, more complex sentence structures found in printed works like books. We suggest the AP style guide for your content as a basis.

Using an editorial style guide is a good foundation. However, you may need to take it further for your brand. If you manage writers or have more than a couple of people contributing to your site's content, it's good to have content style guide specified for you so all content contributors can write with the same style and TOV.

If you are not sure where to start, below are some iconic examples of well-defined style guides:

- [MailChimp's Content Style Guide](#) [2]

Mailchimp's content style guide, designed for Mailchimp's writers but offered as a public resource, is famous among content strategists and web writers. They invite you to use their style guide for internal purposes, so borrow parts you like and add other parts you may need relating to your agency.

- [Drupal](#) [3]

Drupal's open source platform has helped millions manage their content. Their content style guide is also open for anyone to find inspiration or build upon. They do a great job of communicating and standardizing Drupal-specific terms.

- [Dubizzle](#) [4]

Dubizzle's sole purpose is to disrupt consumer exploitation. Their content style guide is brief and direct ? mainly addressing their core beliefs, TOV and messaging principles.

When writing for the web, keep your sentence structure simple. Not only is it less annoying to scan through, the [Plain Writing Act](#) [5] is actually a law required by federal government sites. If you are not sure your language is clear and simple enough, you can use a great tool called the [Hemingway App](#) [6]. As you type, it keeps your writing in check by highlighting run-on sentences or blocks of text that may be confusing or too long.

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